

VZCZCXRO5858  
PP RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHKB #0804/01 1771042  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
P 261042Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3346  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2217  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHDIR/IRAN RPO DUBAI PRIORITY  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 0594

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000804

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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, INR, AND NEA/IR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/26/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IR](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: GOAJ SHARES DOCUMENT ALLEGING IRANIAN PLOT IN  
AZERBAIJAN

REF: A. BAKU 758  
[B](#). 06 BAKU 1700  
[C](#). BAKU 557

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Donald Lu per 1.4 (b,c,d).

[1](#). (C) During a June 14 meeting with the "Friends of Azerbaijan" on media freedom, Presidential Chief of Staff Ramiz Mehdiyev gave the Ambassador a Farsi-language document that he said indicated that Iranian security forces had instructed Iranian religious groups to use the media to foment dissent in Azerbaijan (ref a). Mehdiyev characterized the paper as an Iranian document but did not provide any information on how or when the Azerbaijani Government had obtained the document.

[2](#). (C) Unofficial Embassy translation of the document follows:

(Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Memo Stationery)  
(Memo stamped 'highly confidential')  
(Memo stamped 'for swift action')  
(Date indecipherable)

To: Honored Representative of the Leadership Institution  
(aka Supreme Leader's Office) for International Affairs  
(following code/acronym indecipherable)

From: East Azerbaijan Basij Resistance Force Sepah (following abbreviation indecipherable)

Peace Be Unto You:

Respectfully, given the rise of identity-seeking (?) Pan-Turkic separatist movements in the Islamic Republic of Iran including areas where Azerbaijanis live, it is essential that you take action to combat these separatist movements in our country's northwest so that by using the principle of the primacy of religion we bring about (indecipherable) and the lack of attraction of the ordinary and revolutionary people of Azerbaijan to this movement.

Likewise, it is also necessary to mention that in order to combat the spread of separatism amongst the people, we must present these identity-seeking (?) people to be

anti-religious agents of foreign powers, so that we resort this time too to the ploy of appealing to the religious extremism that exists in abundance amongst our people and which has been demonstrated during Constitutional Movement (1907) and the Islamic Revolution.

Therefore it is necessary for you to organize people in the Azerbaijan Republic and Nakhchivan so that in one of their newspapers (indecipherable two to three words) religion, the best ploy being insulting revered figures in Islam to include the Prophet (PBUH).

Endeavor in every possible way to ensure the physical and financial security of the people being used in this plan.

Your reward (indecipherable) the Unknown Soldiers of the 12th Imam and Leader with God.

(signed)  
East Azerbaijan Basic Resistance Command  
General Mohammad Yusef Shakeri

COPIES:  
Supreme Leader's Office  
Intelligence Minister, for information  
Iranian Embassy in Azerbaijan Republic, for information  
Ayatollah Shabastari, Supreme Leader's representative in East Azerbaijan

(End text)

13. (C) Comment: Without any further information from the GOAJ on the origin of this document, it is impossible for the Embassy to verify its bona fides. Senior GOAJ officials -- including Mehdiyev and President Aliyev -- have alleged for several months that the Iranian Government was behind a

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November 2006 article published in "Sanat," a little-known Azerbaijani newspaper, that was critical of Islam (ref b). (Author Rafiq Tagi and editor Samir Sadagatoglu were later tried and convicted on charges of inciting religious hatred, ref c.) Senior GOAJ officials pointed to the article and subsequent outcry from religiously conservative Azerbaijanis as evidence that Iran was seeking to foment unrest in Azerbaijan. If authentic, this document -- with its apparent instructions to plant anti-Islamic articles in the Azerbaijani media -- would appear to bolster the GOAJ's claims. Although Iran undoubtedly seeks to influence events in Azerbaijan, it is unclear whether this document presents the compelling "evidence" that Mehdiyev claimed. Mehdiyev's dramatic presentation of this document during a meeting in which the international community was criticizing Azerbaijan's deteriorating media environment undoubtedly was intended to influence as well as inform his interlocutors. Given the GOAJ's historic reluctance to publicly criticize Iran, Mehdiyev's readiness to blame Iran in a multilateral meeting also hints at a new dynamic in Azerbaijan's relationship with Iran.

14. (S/NF) Comment Continued: GRPO passed a copy of the document to the Ministry of National Security (MNS) on June 20. Embassy believes that the MNS' Iran expert will be able to comment and provide further information. We will report any additional information septel.

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